Amendments to the Claims

Please amend Claims 1, 12, and 23. The Claim Listing below will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

Claim Listing

1.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus for switching signals in a network, comprising:

multiple first switch fabrics to perform facility protection switching at a subrate of the signals relative to a rate at which the signals are received by the multiple first switch fabrics; and

a second switch fabric coupled to the first switch fabrics via respective switch interface modules to switch a subset of the signals in a non-facility protection switching manner among the first switch fabrics, the coupling via the respective switch interface modules allowing a reduced number of links between the first switch fabrics and the second switch fabric relative to coupling the first switch fabrics directly to the second switch fabric, the reduced number of links being a function of a minimum number of links required to support an aggregate bandwidth forwarded to the second switch fabric.

2.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first and second switch fabrics are coupled to a single point of control.

3.   (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics include less configuration than the second switch fabric.

4.   (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics include less granularity than the second switch fabric.

5.   (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics also perform local switching.

6. (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 further including redundant first or second switch fabrics.

7. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first or second switch fabrics support Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) switching, fixed-length switching, or variable-length switching.

8. (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the first switch fabrics perform facility protection switching within a predetermined time span in response to multiple simultaneous failures in the network.

9. (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the coupling between the first and second switch fabrics is configurable.

10. (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 further including a content processor coupled to and between the first and second switch fabric to convert the signals from a first protocol to a second protocol.

11. (Original) The apparatus according to Claim 1 wherein the facility protection switching includes Linear Automatic Protection Switching (LAPS), Unidirectional Path Switched Ring (UPSR) protection switching, Bidirectional Line Switched Ring (BLSR) protection switching, and 1:n protection switching.

12. (Currently Amended) A method for switching signals in a network, comprising:
    performing facility protection switching at a subrate of the signals by multiple first switch fabrics relative to a rate at which the signals are received by the multiple first switch fabrics;
    performing facility protection switching at multiple switch interface modules; and
    switching a subset of the signals in a non-facility protection switching manner among the multiple first switch fabrics by a second switch fabric to allow a reduced number of links between the multiple first switch fabrics and the second switch fabric

relative to coupling the first switch fabrics directly to the second switch fabric, the reduced number of links being a function of a minimum number of links required to support an aggregate bandwidth forwarded to the second switch fabric.

13. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 12 further including controlling the first and second switch fabrics via a single point of control.

14. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including configuring the first switch fabrics less than the second switch fabric.

15. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including processing the signals with the first switch fabrics with less granularity than the second switch fabric.

16. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including performing local switching with the multiple first switch fabrics.

17. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including supporting redundant facility protection switching and redundant non-facility protection switching.

18. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including operating the first and second switch fabrics using Time Division Multiplexing (TDM) switching, fixed-length switching, or variable-length switching.

19. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 wherein performing facility protection switching occurs within a predetermined time span in response to multiple simultaneous failures in the network.

20. (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including adjustably configuring coupling between the multiple first switch fabrics and the second switch fabric.

21.   (Original) The method according to Claim 12 further including converting the signals from a first communications protocol to a second communications protocol.

22.   (Original) The method according to Claim 12 wherein the facility protection switching includes Linear Automatic Protection Switching (LAPS), Unidirectional Path Switched Ring (UPSR) protection switching, Bidirectional Line Switched Ring (BLSR) protection switching, and 1:n protection switching.

23.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus for switching signals in a network, comprising:

first means for performing facility protection switching at a subrate of the signals relative to a rate at which the signals are received by the means; and

second means for switching a subset of the signals among the first means in a non-facility protection switching manner, the second means coupled to the first means via switch interface means that allow a reduced number of links between the first means and the second means relative to coupling the first switch fabrics directly to the second switch fabric, the reduced number of links being a function of a minimum number of links required to support an aggregate bandwidth forwarded to the second switch fabric.